

Message Text

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47

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6095

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, IS, US

SUBJ: ISRAELI PRESS ON DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY

SAUNDER'S CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING

1. FOLLOWING IS EMBASSY'S TRANSLATION OF MARCH 30 ARTICLE
BY DAVAR'S WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT NAHUM BARNEA ENTITLED
" THEY TOLD US THAT THE PASSES DID NOT HAVE MILITARY
IMPORTANCE".

2. BEGIN TEXT: U.S. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR THE
MIDDLE EAST HAL SAUNDERS IN A CLOSED BRIEFING TO A
GROUP OF CONGRESSIONAL AIDES SAID " AN EGYPTIAN GENERAL
AND AN ISRAELI GENERAL TOLD US THAT THE MITLA AND GIDI
PASSES HAD NO MILITARY IMPORTANCE. THEY MADE IT CLEAR
TO US THAT IF THERE IS A NEW WAR IN THE SINAI, THE
PASSES WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT ROLE".

3. SAUNDERS WHO WAS MEMBER OF DR. KISSINGER'S
NEGOTIATING TEAM ON HIS LAST MIDDLE EAST MISSION, REFUSED
TO IDENTIFY THE ISRAELI GENERAL WHO CLAIMED, ACCORDING
TO HIM, THAT THE PASSES HAD NO MILITARY VALUE, BUT HIS
LISTENERS BELIEVED THAT HE MEANT THE CHIEF OF STAFF. IN
THE BRIEFING SAUNDERS PRAISED EGYPTIAN READINESS
TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT AND THE MODERATION OF
PRESIDENT SADAT DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS.

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4. OTHER U.S. ADMINISTRATION SOURCES EXPLAINED YESTERDAY THAT IN THEIR OPINION THE ISRAELI PROPOSAL TO DIVIDE THE PASSES HAD NO MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE, AND THE PURPOSE WAS ONLY TO PROTECT THE PRESTIGE OF THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT, AFTER IT HAD PUBLICLY DECLARED THAT IT WOULD NOT WITHDRAW FROM THE PASSES FOR LESS THAN A NON-BELLIGERENCY AGREEMENT, ISRAELI SOURCES CLAIMED IN THIS REGARD THAT THE DIVISION OF THE PASSES WOULD HAVE LEFT HER WITHOUT OFFENSIVE ADVANTAGES BUT ALLOW HER TO KEEP AN IMPORTANT BASE FOR DEFENSE.

5. ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS CLAIMED THAT ISRAEL MADE A MISTAKE BY PRESENTING AT THE BEGINNING OF NEGOTIATIONS PROPOSALS WHICH IN EFFECT EXHAUSTED POSSIBILITIES OF CONCESSIONS INSTEAD OF LEAVING OPEN THE POSSIBILITY OF A COMPROMISE LATER ON. IN THIS WAY BOTH THE AMERICANS AND THE EGYPTIANS WERE MISLED.

6. U.S. OFFICIALS FURTHER CLAIM THAT DESPITE THE FACT THAT PRIME MINISTER RABIN'S POPULARITY IN ISRAEL HAS INCREASED AS A RESULT OF THE SUSPENSION OF NEGOTIATIONS, HE IS IN EFFECT A CAPTIVE OF MORE HAWKISH ELEMENTS. THEY CLAIM THAT THE GOVERNMENT NOW FACES MORE DIFFICULT PROBLEMS SUCH AS PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION IN GENEVA WHICH IT WILL NOT HAVE THE ABILITY TO RESOLVE.

7. THEY ALSO CLAIM THAT THE ISRAELIS VERSION, ACCORDING TO WHICH THE EGYPTIANS DEMAND BIR GIFGABA AIR BASE, IS CORRECT ONLY AS REGARDS THE OPENING STAGE OF THE TALKS. DURING THE TALKS THE EGYPTIANS WITHDREW THIS DEMAND, ACCORDING TO THEM (U.S. OFFICIALS). END TEXT
VELIOTES

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